

Control of Underslotting and Personal Rank Assignments

1. The Personal Rank Assignment (PRA) and underslotting system has been established in the Agency for 20 years or more. For most of this time, the allowable grade spread has been two above and two below the grade of a position. This means, in effect, that the grade spread for any particular job is five GS grades. To illustrate from the point of view of salary this establishes a tremendous range of pay from \$12,615 to \$31,523 for incumbents of a grade GS-13 position. The regulatory provisions covering the system are included in HR 20-17, Management of Staff Personnel.

2. The purpose of the system has been to provide flexibility in assignment of personnel without continuing changes in position grades as individuals are appointed or reassigned. These concepts were developed when the Agency work force was considerably smaller than our authorized position requirements.

3. Now when the on-duty strength of most components equals or exceeds their authorized positions, the relationship between an employee's grade and the grade of his position is far more direct. In this situation assignment actions carry much stronger implications. As we adjust to this change, it makes less and less sense for one employee to continue to be paid at a higher level than the grade of the position he holds while at the same time another similar employee is paid at a lower level than the grade of his assigned position. Assuming that the Agency will continue to operate at or near ceiling, management must give more attention to the implications of these relationships between the pay status of employees and the grades of their assigned positions.

4. I believe it is time to establish Agency-wide limits on both the range and duration of underslotting and PRA assignments in order to ensure appropriate management review and action in such cases. The Agency should adopt a policy:

a. to allow two-grade under-slotting and PRA's in overseas assignments and for the duration of those assignments;

b. to limit under-slotting and PRA assignments at Headquarters to one grade above or below the grade of the position except that a two-grade spread is allowed when grades GS-08 and GS-10 are involved; and

c. to limit PRA assignments in Headquarters to two years -- the same period for which salary retention is allowable when an employee is changed to lower grade through no fault of his own.